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Public–Private Interface in Brazilian Education
Governance: Reflections from a Subnational Analysis

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Abstract: This article investigates changes in the interference of the private sector in Brazilian public education, following the military dictatorship through today, focusing on evaluation policies that introduce data for education governance and results-based management. This research identifies changes related to educational policies and practices influenced by managerial models, showing the progressive disconnection of the public character from educational institutions. The political–educational context of the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina and its capital, Florianópolis, serves as the empirical case. Qualitative content analysis explores how ideas from the private sector have been integrated into Brazilian public education and how evaluation and the use of data according to the logic of that sector contribute to incorporating managerial practices into public education governance. Interviews with key actors in the field of education in Santa Catarina and Florianópolis reveal how the private sector influenced political developments

in education. The analysis indicates that education governance in that context follows the principles of New Public Management, associated with public-private interactions, providing a specific type of rationality to the field of education.

Keywords: education governance; politics; public-private interface; Brazil; Santa Catarina; subnational level; New Public Management

La interface público-privada en la gobernanza educacional brasileña: Consideraciones desde un análisis subnacional

Resumen: Este artículo investiga los cambios en las formas de interferencia del sector privado en la educación pública brasileña, concentrándose en el período desde el final de la dictadura militar al momento actual, con foco en las políticas de evaluación, que introducen el uso de datos para la gobernanza educacional, y en la gestión por resultados. Se observa la transformación de las políticas y prácticas educacionales bajo la influencia de modelos gerenciales y se procura mostrar la progresiva modificación del sentido de público en las instituciones educacionales. Utilizase el contexto político-educacional del estado de Santa Catarina y de su capital, Florianópolis, como caso empírico y el análisis cualitativo de contenido como método de investigación para explorar como ocurre la inserción de ideas de la esfera privada en la educación pública brasileña y de qué forma la evaluación y el uso de datos segundo la lógica de esa esfera contribuyen para la incorporación de prácticas gerenciales en la gobernanza educacional. Presentase algunos desarrollos políticos en la educación catarinense basados en la gestión privada, a partir de entrevistas con actores-clave en el campo educacional de Santa Catarina. El análisis indica que la gobernanza educacional en el estado sigue los preceptos del *New Public Management*, con presencia de interacciones público-privadas que visan dar un carácter racional al campo educacional en Santa Catarina.

Palabras-clave: gobernanza educacional; política; interface público-privada; Brasil; Santa Catarina; nivel subnacional; *New Public Management*

A interface público-privada na governança educacional brasileira: Considerações a partir de uma análise subnacional

Resumo: Este artigo investiga as mudanças nas formas de ingerência do setor privado na educação pública brasileira, concentrando-se no período que vai desde o final da ditadura militar ao momento atual, com foco nas políticas de avaliação, que introduzem o uso dos dados para a governança educacional, e na gestão por resultados. Observa-se a transformação das políticas e práticas educacionais sob influência de modelos gerenciais e procura-se mostrar a progressiva descaracterização do sentido de público nas instituições educacionais. Utiliza-se o contexto político-educacional do estado de Santa Catarina e da sua capital, Florianópolis, como caso empírico e a análise qualitativa de conteúdo como método de pesquisa para explorar como se deu a inserção de ideias da esfera privada na educação pública brasileira e de que forma a avaliação e o uso de dados segundo a lógica dessa esfera contribuem para a incorporação de práticas gerenciais na governança educacional. Apresentam-se alguns desenvolvimentos políticos na educação catarinense influenciados pela gestão privada, a partir de entrevistas com atores-chave no campo educacional de Santa Catarina. A análise indica que a governança educacional no estado segue os preceitos do *New Public Management*, com presença de interações público-privadas que visam dar um caráter racional ao campo da educação em Santa Catarina.

Palavras-chave: governança educacional; política; interface público-privada; Brasil; Santa Catarina; nível subnacional; *New Public Management*

Introduction

This study relies on the assumption that politics represents a social construction. As such, it is understood that politics is not only immersed in power, but also in uncertainty (Hecl, 1974), thus governing means to face challenges. Palonen (2008) associates contingency with the Weberian concept of chance, denoting possibility, occasion, opportunity, realizability, and diverging from probability. Therefore, room for change exists, even though change is not necessarily expected and does not always occur. Hall (1993) suggests that political changes could be better understood through the processes of social learning.

Social learning is not limited to the assimilation of new information, since it may incorporate the accommodation of new ideas that transform the ways of acting; the proposition of parallel lines of action; the rejection of new information, which may still produce reflections on prevalent ideas; decoupling; and symbolic change.¹ The learning process is dynamic and cyclic: that is, new ideas introduce new practices, which are constantly assessed, receiving feedback, and generating additional ideas. In this context, social learning occurs when politics change as a result of the learning process itself (Hall, 1993).

Recognizing politics as learning presupposes the constancy of change within the political development and cycle, as well as along the political history of a specific context. From this perspective, the effects of prior policies and experiences become highly relevant to processes related to policy building, as well as the social and economic conditions of the environment in which the political process develops (Hall, 1993, p. 277). Learning and change are commonly fomented by experts, working either for the state or in privileged positions at the interface between the state bureaucracy and the private sector.

Hall (1993) describes three main types of political change. The first is characterized by the continuity of political goals and tools. As such, only the context changes based on previous experiences, future projections, and under the influence of newly available knowledge. The second type of political change retains the same goals, whereas the tools to achieve them change as a consequence of dissatisfaction with prior experiences. The third type consists of changing both political goals and tools. The first and the second types of political change correspond to ordinary political processes, whereas the third type represents a paradigm shift due to the radical changes it produces. The third type of political change is associated with political discontinuity, similar to Thomas Kuhn's notion of scientific paradigm shifts. Radical political change reflects the absence of state autonomy towards the diverse social demands and the influence of socioeconomic development, elections, political parties, and other interests (Hall, 1993).

Based on this framework, this article investigates private sector interference in Brazilian public education, which has intensified since the beginning of the 20th century. The scope of this study, however, focuses on the most recent period of this paradigm shift: from the redemocratization of Brazil following the end of a military dictatorship to the current context today. This research lies in the field of education in which managerial models influenced the transformation of educational policies and practices. The article concentrates specifically on evaluation policies that introduced results-oriented management into education, and aims to illustrate the progressive disfigurement of the public character within educational institutions.

This research relies on the empirical case of the political-educational context of Santa Catarina, a state located in southern Brazil, with around 6.2 million inhabitants, and its capital city Florianópolis (approximate population of 400,000). Santa Catarina is the only Brazilian state to order

¹These ideas were inspired by Coburn's (2004) analysis of the relationship between the institutional environment and classroom practices.

an educational report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).² Moreover, it was recognized as a pioneer in quality assurance and evaluation policies in PISA³ 2010. Since 2005, Santa Catarina's Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) has occupied the top positions in the national context. Moreover, the municipality of Florianópolis has been actively developing educational policies emphasizing performance evaluation. One example of such policies is *Prova Floripa*, a large-scale municipal-level assessment established in 2007 that relies on financial support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).⁴

The data analyzed here were collected during 34 semi-structured thematic interviews with key actors in the subnational field of education (representatives from the state and the municipal governments, educational boards, foundations, associations, and private companies). The interviews were guided by four main objectives: 1) to understand the respondents' views on quality and evaluation in basic education, the interviewees' concrete involvement in—and the perceived impact of it on—quality assurance and evaluation policy and practice; 2) to identify the main actors (collectively or individually) in the field, their role and action related to and perceived impact on quality and evaluation policies and practices, and to understand their position in the field, as well as the connections and interactions among different actors; 3) to understand the changes in actor relations, the role 'quality' and 'evaluation' practices and policies have played in such changes, to identify whether and how they define the relationships between actors, and to understand the transnational connections and their impact on national and subnational policies and practices; and 4) to understand the expectations and possibilities actors perceive towards the future. The material was collected in 2015 and 2016 within the research project '*Transnational Dynamics in Quality Assurance and Evaluation Politics of Basic Education in Brazil, China, and Russia*,' funded by the Academy of Finland.⁵ This project also analyzed international, national, state (Santa Catarina), and municipal (Florianópolis) documents, supplemented by observations (around 50 hours) from state and municipal governmental organization activities. While not the primary data analyzed in this research, both the documents and observations from the broader study supplement the interpretation of the interview data.

This study employs qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) as the research method to answer the following questions: 1) How were private ideas inserted into Brazilian education?; 2) How did evaluation and the use of data contribute to the incorporation of managerial practices into educational institutions in Brazil?; and 3) What developments emerged along the private-oriented policies in the field of education in Santa Catarina?

The theoretical framework for this analysis draws upon governance theories and institutionalism, presented in the next section. The following section synthesizes how ideas originating in the private sector penetrated into the public sector in Brazilian education. The subnational case is, then, described, along with the analysis of interview data with representatives

²See: OCDE, 2010. Avaliações de Políticas Nacionais de Educação: Estado de Santa Catarina, Brasil. ISSN 1990-0198 (online).

³PISA is the acronym for OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. Brazil has participated in PISA since 2000.

⁴The last edition of *Prova Floripa* was released in 2016. This large-scale assessment was discontinued after the new municipal government took office in January 2017.

⁵Information about the project is available in Kauko et al. (2018) and via the following websites: <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/kupoli-unit/research/bcr/>, <http://www.uta.fi/edu/en/research/projects/evalpolitics.html>, and <https://research.uta.fi/eduknow/bcr/> (retrieved on December 27, 2017).

from public and private institutions at the state and municipal levels. Finally, the article offers concluding remarks on the analysis, and discusses the implications for future research.

From Government to Governance, from Uncertainty to Predictability

The 20th century experienced a transmutation of the nation-state model accompanied by a subsequent interference of other sectors in public authority; state autonomy diminished towards the emergence of supranational and infranational structures (Bonnafous-Boucher, 2005). Some scholars assume that these changes derive from globalization, although the mere reference to globalization does not necessarily explain the processes, interactions, and effects associated with the transformations of the nation-state (Dale, 1999). This article does not contribute to this discussion, but argues instead that such changes altered the institutional center of legitimacy: that is, the government.

The concept of government was incorporated into the concept of governance (Bonnafous-Boucher, 2005), which prevails both in discourse and practice. The reorientation towards governance was enabled by neoliberal reforms and built upon two prerogatives: the appearance of deregulation and a strong central power facilitated by a variety of political technologies (Ozga, 2009). Governance privileges rules to guide action and interaction (or commitment) across various instances instead of highlighting the identity and authority of the entity that governs (Bonnafous-Boucher, 2005). This new mode of governing results from competition among different domains and institutions as much as it contributes to bolstering such competition. The competition related to interaction processes and the design of guiding rules constitutes what Foucault (1997, p. 74) called the liberal rationalization of government.

Different theories or models of governance serve as cognitive and normative references to orient policymakers (Maroy, 2009). Due to space limitations, this article concentrates on four models, all within the scope of this research. The order in which they appear is unrelated to the historical period during which each of the governance models emerged and does not reflect notions of linearity, progress, or evolution. These four models may simultaneously exist in different contexts as well as coexist in hybrid governance regimes.

The first model, known as 'bureaucratic professional' (Maroy, 2008), refers to traditional governance practices, such as formal communication, labor division, hierarchical positions, standardization, qualification, specialization, and professionalization, often related to Weber's ideas concerning the efficient and rational processes to organize and maintain social order (Weber, 2015 [1921]). The most striking feature of this model is its conformity to rules, manifest through the establishment of norms, regulations, and standards in education, whose compliance is monitored through surveillance and inspection.

The second governance model, New Public Management (NPM), was inspired by the economic rationalization in management theories and practices (Hood & Jackson, 1991). This model brings an entrepreneurial spirit to the public sector, reinforcing decentralization, encouraging the use of quasi-market structures in governmental institutions, and emphasizing control over outcomes. NPM creates new relationships in the political arena and in the public sphere regulated by accountability regimes, comparison and performance management, standards, best practices, and evaluation. In education, the 'suppliers' (schools and teachers) become responsible for the educational outcomes, whereas government incentives increase competitiveness within schools. In addition, NPM stimulates students, their families, and society as a whole to monitor quality in education by emphasizing public service transparency, the publication of educational outcomes, participation and involvement of the school community and other sectors of the society in political processes, and the empowerment of individuals through choice.

The post-bureaucratic model is the third theory of governance. This model builds upon features that surpass bureaucratic governance: autonomy to manage self-governed schools, balance between centralization and decentralization, external evaluation, free choice, diversification, standardization, and teachers' training regulation (Maroy, 2009). Such features relate to the market—quasi-market regulation—and to the 'evaluative state' (Neave, 1988), and aim to overcome inefficiency in the bureaucratic system through continuous improvement to withstand competition (Maroy, 2009). The state continues to define goals, but the market operationalizes policy. For instance, schools compete to reach the goals proposed by the central government, undergo external evaluations, receive symbolic and material incentives or sanctions, are encouraged to keep 'clients' informed about performance, and the 'rational' choice of the 'clientele' pushes schools to improve their operations (Maroy, 2009). The objective of such a governance model, stemming from a social learning process, focuses on higher quality in education. Yet, this objective serves as instrumental rationality in contrast to rational action oriented by values and beliefs.

The fourth model is governance at a distance. The principles that orient this model depart from traditional governance methods (i.e., rule of law, restrictions, and regulations); however, governance at a distance assumes more autonomy and self-responsibility (Kickert, 1995). Such ideas are sustained through trust in the power of expertise (Latour, 1987) and imply that actors share a significant degree of autonomy based on their will to engage (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 14). In this paradigm, processes are not necessarily prompted by the center (government), but through an interconnected network compounded by relatively autonomous actors. The most apparent advantage of this governance model is that the focus on individual agency reduces the likelihood of resistance to governance measures (Kickert, 1995). Data are used as governance technology (Rose & Miller, 1992), whereas regulation and evaluation instruments reinforce central steering at a distance. The delegation of autonomy to local actors simultaneously creates demand for new experts and data infrastructures, and a dependence on those experts and data (Lawn & Segerholm, 2011).

Beyond the idea of governance, it is important to highlight the expansion of the rational organization over the bureaucratic organization. Rationalization, as described by Bromley & Meyer (2015), surpasses the Weberian concept since it incorporates a cultural dimension, manifest through the increased influence of science in different domains, the relevance of empowerment relative to human capital, and the belief that education is a propeller of progress. The rational organization, or 'hyper-organization' (Bromley & Meyer, 2015), incorporates functions that go beyond production, building blurred boundaries between its definition and objectives. This new organization is rationalized and has agency, thus ensuring sovereignty. Moreover, it reflects institutionalized cultural models as much as it is mediated by direct and indirect environmental pressures (Bromley & Meyer, 2015, p. 23).

Governance theories and the expansion of the rational organization in public and private sectors are embedded in paradigm shifts, such as the third type of political change outlined by Hall (1993). The new emergent paradigm aligns with the dominant production and consumption system, Post-Fordism, which emphasizes specialization, differentiation, and flexibilization in the face of new information technologies, and is associated with different phenomena: for instance, managerialism, hyperliberal reforms (Touraine, 1992), and the post-bureaucratic state (Bromley & Meyer, 2015; Maroy, 2008). The neoliberal ideas that prevail in such regimes are oriented by contracts in which the financial aspect plays a crucial role. These contracts are not limited to public actors, since private actors have increasingly taken more responsibility over tasks that previously exclusively belonged to the public sector. Such changes include the reorganization of public management by projects, thereby splitting policy development and management from its implementation through the establishment of independent agencies; rigor in public expenditures, implemented following budget cuts, downsizing, and strategic redirection; the development of public-private partnerships aimed at

guaranteeing efficiency in the public sector; performance quantification to ensure accountability, while increasing responsibility; and intensifying outcome evaluation via mechanisms of performance-based salary, bonification systems, and awards among others.

The high speed, rhythm, and intensity of changes increase uncertainty and risk, which, in turn, produce cultural changes, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. The cultural changes call for rational action and demand professionalization, reinforcing the doctrines of human and scientific empowerment. New rules, laws, and regulations (both in hard and soft modes, arising from state or other organizations) are created to define 'what makes an entity an organization' (Bromley & Meyer, 2015, p. 101) and to orient social actions. Commensurable and accountable measures are taken to ensure conformity with those regulations and guide social steering (Bromley & Meyer, 2015). Such measures enable the connection of the local context to the broader context (Bromley & Meyer, 2015, p. 118), allowing comparison between different organizations, eventually demanding more professionalization and restarting the cycle. The social space becomes more controllable and controlled (green area in Figure 1) through conversion of uncertainty into rationalization. This occurs via professionalization and specialization when individuals are socialized through schooling to manage uncertainty (Bromley & Meyer, 2015, p. 103). The primary focus of these processes is decision-making; therefore, the role of managers becomes relevant, whereas professionalism is certified by the scientific knowledge that empowers individuals. The scientific rationality of professionalism is subjected to hard regulation and, more often, to soft regulation (e.g., accreditation, certification, standards, and action plans). The certainty and security transmitted through scores, indexes, indicators, classifications, and rankings contribute to creating a more objective and predictable social space.

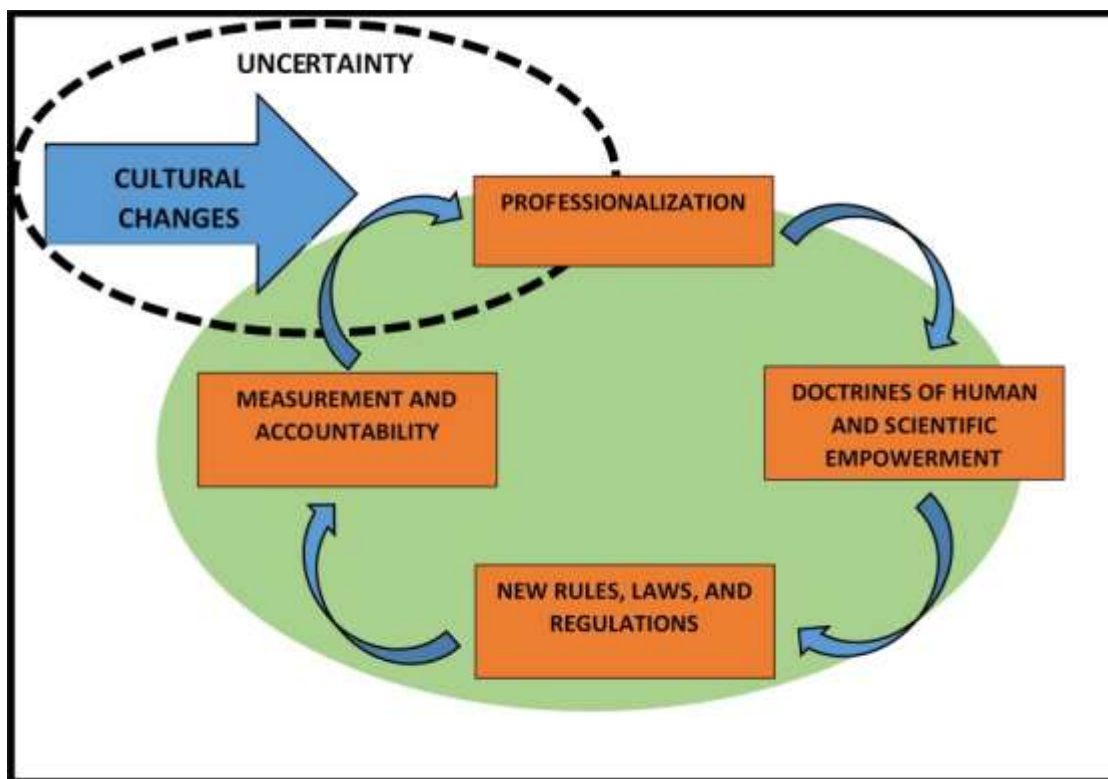


Figure 1. Expansion of rationalization

Lawn (2011) argues that data are crucial in current governance models. The use of data in governing is embedded into a 'calculative rationality' (Bauman, 1992). Governance through data, emerging alongside the increased production of data and the use of data to steer performance, became essential to the governability of education (soft governance). The categorization of individuals enabled by data helps the governability (Lawn, 2011), whereas classification, quantification, and ranking provide the appearance of scientific objectivity and methodological rigor in policymaking. In addition, this rationality disciplines and governs individual conduct through the construction of legitimacy discourses used to shape and orient people, creating a rational mentality (or belief) (Löwenheim, 2008, p. 258) based on the concept of governmentality (Foucault, 1991). Such mentality allows for the naturalization of certain ideas, actions, and attitudes, perceived as a free choice rather than an imposed or disciplinary process. Furthermore, this mentality renders individuals responsible for their own performance and results. On the one hand, these processes develop self-regulation and self-evaluation among individuals; while, on the other hand, they trigger issues of responsibility and blame.

The Penetration of the Private Sector into Brazilian Public Education

Some scholars defend Brazilian political discourse stemming from international organizations' recommendations, suggesting that Brazil should overcome its efficiency, efficacy, and productivity crisis given the relationship between the education and the labor market demands (e.g., Coelho, 2008). International organizations often associate education with the economic development of a country. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) of the United Nations (UN), for instance, suggest that education and knowledge represent the cornerstones of productive change, serving as competitive advantages for any country (CEPAL-UNESCO, 1996).

Rappleye (2012) argues that the international debate on policy transfer is divided into two camps: the global culture theory oriented towards the global convergence of structures that define educational systems, and the systems theory that analyzes the influence of globalization specifically from the local-level standpoint.

The global culture approach investigates the convergence and isomorphism of institutions, practices, and beliefs through 'scripts' disseminated by 'international carriers' (Meyer & Ramirez, 2003; Ramirez, 2012). This theoretical framework adopts a macro-sociological perspective to study the shared patterns of actions legitimized by rational and institutionalized 'myths' (reality models or belief systems; see Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Ramirez, 2012). According to this perspective, 'myths' are not necessarily transferred from one context to another through coercion or mimicking, but are transferred by diffusion: that is, the more one actor (or organization) adopts a given policy, the greater the likelihood that other actors will do the same due to the degree of world integration, whereby some countries influence others (Ramirez, 2012). This process leads to institutional isomorphism, through which schools not only appear similar, but also share similar objectives and policies. By contrast, when the 'myth' (expected) diverges from reality, education reform(s) must fix institutional 'decoupling' (Ramirez, 2012). Institutionalization and the will to follow the 'formal structures' are related to legitimacy in the construction of actors' identities (Ramirez, 2012). The global culture theory, however, has been criticized due to its lack of historical components (e.g., the role of capitalism in diffusion processes), indifference to local processes, and the use of strictly Western arguments (Rappleye 2015; Schriewer & Martinez, 2004; Steiner-Khamisi, 2012; Waldow, 2012).

The systems theory, by contrast, is represented by policy borrowing and lending (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2004), in which borrowing is selective and resonates distinctly in different contexts (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). This argument challenges the political convergence and institutional isomorphism emphasized by the global culture approach. The appropriation of the idea of ‘externalization’ from the perspective of self-referential social systems explains how educational policies are transferred (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Succinctly, this theory describes the world as constituted by different social systems, whose functions and organization are based on communications associated with each system. Each system refers to other systems or ‘externalizes’ communications from other systems, which are adapted according to its internal logic to legitimize political decisions and actions (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Internal logic is then refracted by local limitations and interpretation needs, resulting from cultural traditions, collective mentality, political forces, and dominant ideologies (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004, p. 50).

Similar to Kauko et al. (2016) and Centeno et al. (2017), this research interprets the policy transfer in Brazil using the systems theory. Thus, it assumes local agency selects, adapts, and implements international policies. Some policies are linked to international loans, such as those from the World Bank (WB) and IDB. The education reforms proposed by WB, for instance, are justified by what the bank considers a lack of quality and productivity within the Brazilian education system (Figueiredo, 2009). Furthermore, those education projects funded by the bank adhere to a managerial logic seeking the best, most cost-effectiveness solution to solve education problems, applying mechanisms from the private sector to public education.

This international influence (particularly from WB), combined with prior or parallel developments—economic and technical perspectives based on managerialism, the promulgation of the ‘Primary and Secondary Education Act’ (1965), and the publication of the Coleman Report (1966) in the United States; the establishment of an international association to evaluate educational achievements (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement - IEA); and international indicators of quality in education defined by OECD in the 1970s (Coelho, 2008)—nurtured the growth of evaluation mechanisms in Brazilian education. This suggests that using data is not only a social practice or a knowledge pattern, but a new mode of governance.

Evaluation emerged as a structural cornerstone of Brazilian politics (Coelho, 2008) in response to the state developmental crisis (Freitas, 2005). The role of evaluation became particularly relevant in education politics, serving as a central tool to steer education. Its legitimacy and institutionalization transformed evaluation into an important instrument of state regulation. The ‘Executive-State’ (Coelho, 2008) and the ‘Educative-State’ (Machado & Alavarse, 2014) were replaced by the ‘Evaluative-State’ (Afonso, 2013; Freitas, 2005; Neave, 1988) in Brazil, as part of a process that Correia (2010) calls ‘*evaluacracy*’.⁶ Coelho (2008) understands this as the radicalization of the interventionist role in the Brazilian state. According to Freitas (2005), this represented an attempt to recover the state’s political, symbolic, and executive power, aligned to the constraints within the social sector imposed by structural reforms. With the help of evaluation, the state exerts (neoconservative) control over the curriculum, school management, and teacher practices. Meanwhile, market (neoliberal) mechanisms are implemented in public educational spaces (Coelho, 2008).

The democratization climate and the state reorganization following the dictatorial regime encouraged social movements and opportunities for political participation, as observed in the National Conferences of Education (*Conferências Nacionais de Educação*) and in the National Forum in Defense of Public Education (*Fórum Nacional em Defesa da Educação Pública*) (Saviani, 2007). The 1988

⁶‘*Evaluacracy*’ is a symbolic work that joins new actors and institutional mechanisms in the reconstruction of the field of education (Correia, 2010).

Federal Constitution represented a new foundation for the Brazilian political context, since it reflected the principles of NPM and offered the possibilities for pluralistic and democratic political participation. As such, the Constitution outlined important reflections concerning education. For instance, it is the first high-level legislation aimed at assuring quality in education; compulsion and free basic education are maintained, guaranteeing it ‘even for those who were unable to access it at an appropriate age’; it considers compulsory and free education as a subjective public right; and stipulates that the state is responsible for compiling data about basic education students and ensuring, along with students’ family, that they attend school (Brasil, 1988). Another important aspect of the 1988 Constitution with regards to basic education is that it formally decentralizes Brazilian education, delegating duties and responsibilities to the respective federal, state, and municipal education systems, articulating and integrating educational plans and policies among the different governmental levels (Durham, 2010). However, this is a particular type of federalism, as decentralization does not uniformly distribute power among states and municipalities. By contrast, it fomented an extra-constitutional political game, reflecting the relative power of distinct political actors—for instance, governors and mayors—and their influence over the state and federal legislative and executive representatives. Political arenas perform a critical role in this context, where traditional clientelism exists alongside democracy (Souza, 1997).

Democratic euphoria was followed by a variety of structural reforms in the 1990s, which caused economic deregulation, privatization, market openness, and reforms to the social security, health, and education systems (Chossudovsky, 1999). Performance and outcome assessments were presented as tools for achieving efficiency and quality in public policies. Education reforms were legitimized by the ‘school crisis’ (Oliveira, 2011) and the ‘inefficacy crisis of the Brazilian education system’ (Coelho, 2008). Such reforms created a fertile environment for change and innovation; however, those reforms also represented the denial of values, cultures, and traditions existing in schools and threatened the teaching profession (Oliveira, 2011). Oliveira (2011) argues that education reforms focused on management and made use of administrative, financial, and pedagogical decentralization to expand access to basic education in Brazil. In her view, the reforms followed private economic principles (rationalization, flexibility, and modernization) and transferred responsibility to the local level.

New approaches concerning social policies emerged within sectorial reforms, such as assistentialism, voluntarism, and charity. They arise from the transfer of the state’s role to the market managed in accordance with private-sector logic, in which opportunities for profit override social needs (see Ball, 2012). In Wacquant’s (1999) view, such approaches are part of a wider and subliminal diffusion process of neoliberal doxa. In education, this results in the creation of strong alliances and public-private partnerships to support the political process (from design and implementation to the evaluation of policies) (Ball, 2012), and in the delegation of responsibility to private companies, foundations, non-governmental organizations, and the school community via voluntarism, philanthropy, or pure business, with regards to the management and maintenance of educational institutions, pedagogical developments, and teaching (Saviani, 2003). According to Azevedo (2007), this allowed the transfer of state responsibility to society, transforming ‘education as a right’ to ‘education as merchandise’. Education policies became instruments of cultural change forcing individuals to adapt to the new requirements of the neoliberal economic agenda.

The National Education Basis and Guidelines Act (*Lei das Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*—LDBEN), passed in 1996, revisited and broadened some of the principles detailed in the 1988 Federal Constitution. For instance, it reinforces the decentralization of Brazilian education. This act was influenced by some international organizations, especially WB and UNESCO, and events such as the ‘World Conference on Education for All’ that took place in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, as well as various reports (e.g., the Delors Report from UNESCO) (Coelho, 2008). LDBEN

redefined the roles of distinct levels of government concerning education policies. It states that education is an equally shared responsibility across subnational governments and should enjoy the active engagement of society (Castro, 1999). Additionally, LDBEN granted the state jurisdiction to collect, analyze, and disseminate information about Brazilian education, ensuring the establishment of a national assessment of school achievement at all education levels, in collaboration with other education systems across the country, in order to set the priorities for national political agenda and improve education quality (Brasil, 1996).

The impetus for decentralizing Brazilian education—including flexibilization, differentiation, and diversification—contrasts with the centralized steering of educational outcomes (Saviani, 2003). According to Freitas (2008), national policies, which are centrally designed and operationalized via strategic planning, define the rules of the game to subnational governments through ‘measurement–evaluation–information’ and ‘technical assistance’. A strong centralized regulatory intervention produces a weakened autonomy within federative entities. Autonomy is, thus, more rhetorical than real; it serves as justification for evaluation and accountability (Coelho, 2008), making schools and teachers responsible for student outcomes and school performance, especially when such outcomes are bad (Machado & Alavarse, 2014). Rather than promoting technical and bureaucratic competence within subnational spaces, such competence is concentrated at the national level, where new information and communication technologies (ICTs) feature as the primary resources for federal regulation (Freitas, 2008).

Evaluation stands as a managerial data-gathering instrument, aligned with steering and decision-making. Policy evaluation intensified in the 1990s (Faria, 2005), aiming to offer visibility, transparency, and accountability to political processes and ‘good governance’. It meets the demand for public management ‘modernization’ and seeks to legitimate the processes of state reform.⁷ However, evaluation also advocates for punishment, competitiveness, coercion, and centralization (Ribeiro & Gusmão, 2010). As a quantitative, technocratic, and results-oriented mechanism, it ignores the learning processes, transforming knowledge into a product when quantifying, measuring, standardizing, and comparing knowledge along competitive scales (Azevedo, 2007). Evaluation brings surveillance mechanisms (in Foucault’s 2014 terms) to schooling, along with meritorious processes of recruitment, selection, classification, ordering (ranking), and compensation. Brazilian schools are classified according to student performance on standardized tests, and the government sets goals based on indicators to guide incentive policies, resource allocation, assistance, compensation, and sanction, similarly to what happens in Chile and in the United States (Franco & Menezes Filho, 2012).

The Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) was solicited to promote the engagement of civil society in the face of educational reforms resulting from the third meeting of the Education Ministers of the Organization of American States (OAS), which took place in Mexico, in 2003. PREAL promptly convened the Latin American Network of Civil Society Organizations (*Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil por la Educación* [REDUCA]) for this task (Shiroma & Santos, 2012). The meetings organized by REDUCA strengthened the civil society network in Brazil. In 2006, the Gerda Group, the Lemann Foundation, and the Jacobs Foundation, in partnership with PREAL, organized a conference to discuss social responsibility in education and present Latin American ‘best practices’ (Shiroma & Santos, 2012). Shiroma & Santos (2012) point out that the conference was clearly a business meeting, in which corporate representatives met celebrities from the field of education. The conference reports and agreements

⁷For a deeper discussion on state reforms from the 1960s and 1970s in Europe and from the 1990s in Brazil, see Offe (1984), who argues that such changes attempt to respond to the legitimacy crisis and to the lack of the governability of the capitalist state.

served as the basis for the document ‘Commitment All for Education’ (*Compromisso Todos pela Educação*)⁸ (Shiroma & Santos, 2012). The movement ‘All For Education’ (*Todos Pela Educação*) was a natural consequence of the dissemination of an international agenda aligned with corporate interests, which used (and keep using) corporate social responsibility as a way to influence education policies.

‘Commitment All for Education’, produced in collaboration with UNESCO, UNICEF, and the movement ‘All For Education’, contributed to the elaboration of the ‘Target Plan Commitment All for Education’ (*Plano de Metas Compromisso Todos pela Educação*) (Camini, 2010), also known as the ‘Plan for Educational Development’ (*Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação* [PDE]), which passed via federal decree by the president in 2007 (Brazil, 2007). Discussions concerning PDE were less concentrated among educators, scholars, and unions, and took place primarily among political and corporate representatives (Saviani, 2007; Camini, 2010). Subnational governments simply adhered to PDE through consensus-oriented engagement, which Camini (2010) describes as a consented or induced democracy, leaving prominence to other entities. Such a pattern of democracy implies administrative-political permeability, which refers to a combination of subordinated actors’ passivity and easy penetration of dominant actors’ interests (via technical-financial conditioning).

Despite considering PDE an audacious, promising, and polemic education policy, Saviani (2007) argues that it could have been called a ‘pedagogy of outcomes’, which transforms schools into business units where teachers and other school personnel are the ‘workers’, ‘clients’ are spread across the market, and students are the ‘finished product’. These ideas assume the principles stated in the 1990s’ reforms, which aimed to align public finance to state strategic goals (Abrucio, 1997) and to decentralize the control of outputs (Camini, 2010). Control, in this case, is based on limited trust (obtained through controlling the outputs), but sufficient to delegate responsibility (through accountability), granting autonomy only with regards to the choice of the most appropriate means to reach the expected outcomes (Camini, 2010). Operationalization happens via commitment, whereas outcomes connect the central government to operational bodies (Camini, 2010).

Adrião & Garcia (2008) identified a new regulation effort within PDE through the development and implementation of programs aimed at providing technical and financial support to municipalities with a low IDEB. Such support is conditioned to adherence to federal government requirements, which align with NPM principles: for example, information disclosure, participation in external assessments, and commitment to PDE goals among others. One such regulation is the ‘Direct Cash to School Program’ (*Programa Dinheiro Direto na Escola* [PDDE]), which offers financial incentives to schools that achieve IDEB’s goals. In fact, accountability, mainly related to political actors, is one of the cornerstones of PDE, along with social mobilization (MEC, 2008).

The reforms in Brazilian education in the last couple of years transformed education towards individual consumption, which varies according to consumers’ merits and capabilities (Coelho, 2018). This change reduced the role of education as a social right. McNamara et al. (2000) emphasize that the recent changes in the concept of education repositioned educational stakeholders as ‘partners’ in educational ventures. The proximity of the educational reform objectives and economic priorities determined the conceptualization of quality within the managerial efficiency mode. That is, competition towards public resources led to the promotion of certain educational levels at the expense of others; outsourcing and privatization became increasingly popular in education; focalization is generally preferred over universalization (in a context where access to education remains problematic); and the decentralization of education is pursued without providing the

⁸It is interesting to note the following wordplay: instead of ‘education for all’ that oriented the international discourse, the Brazilian actors created the ‘all for education’ motto. This motto focuses on the actors involved in the education (political) process rather than on those who benefit from the education system.

necessary resources (both human and material) and, sometimes, without the political conditions for social control (Campos, 2013).

Private Developments in Public Education in Santa Catarina

As mentioned above, Brazilian education was officially decentralized following redemocratization, with a subsequent delegation of responsibility to states and municipalities. State education systems are responsible for organizing and developing the basic education⁹ institutions funded by the state government and also the privately funded primary and secondary institutions. States define and execute education policies in accordance with national guidelines, coordinating and integrating their actions with those performed at the municipal level. Municipalities share the same responsibility over basic education institutions in municipal education systems. Beyond state, municipal, and private institutions, there is still the federal education system, which groups a smaller number of basic education institutions commonly associated with federal universities and federal institutes of education. This article studies the public–private interface in the state education system of Santa Catarina and the municipal education system of Florianópolis.

Schooling in Santa Catarina dates back to the period when Brazil was still a Portuguese colony and the first Jesuit schools were established in the state. Ecclesiastical power occupied a strategic position in Luso-Brazilian society, such that education remained exclusively the domain of religious congregations until the beginning of 19th century (Valle et al., 2006). The establishment of the first public schools by the state government (which was designated ‘provincial’ government at that time) derived from the federal government delegated responsibility over primary and secondary education to the provinces (Schmidt, 2012). This occurred in 1934, soon after Brazil gained independence. The number of public schools in Santa Catarina increased from 13 in 1834 to 56 in 1860; however, less than 2% of the state population attended both public and private schools (Schmidt, 2012).

The Empire of Brazil (1822–1889) faced various conflicts and alliances between different political-ideological groups. This allowed new social actors to emerge within the political arena and resulted in new educational demands in Santa Catarina (Valle et al., 2006). The federalist orientation to separate the church from the state did not undermine the hegemony of the religious/private sector, persistent in the country since colonization (Valle et al., 2006). Religious groups reacted in Santa Catarina seeking to maintain their power and privileges in state education (Valle et al., 2006). It is noticeable, however, that the religious sector in the state grouped both Catholic and Lutheran churches together (Dallabrida, 2006). The strategies of these organizations were supported by the ‘new social groups that emerged in the state capital and countryside society in the republican period—the political elite of the Republican State Party [*Partido Republicano Catarinense*] and the Romanized clergy of the Catholic Church’ (Dallabrida, 2001, p. 39 apud Valle et al., 2006, p. 38).

Following the Federal Constitution of 1934, which declared four years of primary schooling compulsory, the State Constitution of 1935 determined that Santa Catarina and its municipalities must ensure free access to ‘economically deprived individuals’ to publicly funded primary education (Valle et al., 2006). The right to education, however, remained limited to a tiny proportion of the state population, predominantly in urban areas. The State Constitutions of 1945 and 1947 restated the prerogative of free access to ‘economically deprived individuals’, but only if they ‘would reveal a vocation and capability for professional, technical, or higher education studies’ (Valle et al., 2006, p. 43). The main concern was workers’ training to meet regional demands. This was in line with the

⁹Basic education is compulsory in Brazil. It comprises early-childhood education, and primary and secondary school, according to LDBEN (Brasil, 1996).

developmentism of the 1950s, which considered education a driving-force behind development and a solution to inequality.

The Federal Constitution of 1967 extended the number of years of compulsory education, declaring education compulsory for children aged 7 to 14 years old. The subsequent expansion of schooling in Santa Catarina, however, occurred primarily through private initiative—private schools and community schools (*cenecista*)¹⁰—supported by the government (Valle et al., 2006). The State Constitution of 1989 reinforced the declarations in the 1988 Federal Constitution, ensuring free and compulsory primary and lower secondary education for all in the state system (including state, municipal, and private schools), even for those who did not have access at the proper age. The 1989 State Constitution allocated state and municipal resources primarily to compulsory education in public schools (Valle et al., 2006).

In 2017, 6266 basic education institutions operated in Santa Catarina (INEP, 2018), representing 3% of the total number of basic education institutions in Brazil.¹¹ Among those institutions in the state, 62.32% belonged to municipalities, 20.52% to the state government, 16.53% were private schools, and 39 federal institutions provided basic education (INEP, 2018). Basic education enrollments reached over 1.5 million in 2017 (INEP, 2018), corresponding to 3% of the total basic education enrollments in Brazil. Most students attended municipal schools (48.89%); state and private institutions educated 33.56% and 16.39%, respectively; and federal schools had only 1.17% of Santa Catarina basic education students (INEP, 2018).

The majority of the participants of the interviews conducted in Santa Catarina mentioned a strong partnership between the municipal government of Florianópolis, the state government of Santa Catarina and the private sector, articulated by the Federations of Industries of the State of Santa Catarina (*Federação das Indústrias de Santa Catarina* [FIESC]). Such articulation began in 2012 through the ‘Movement Industry for Education’ (*Movimento A Indústria Pela Educação*), for which one of the representatives of the municipal government described the goals:

Firstly, it [‘Movement Industry for Education’] [aims to] serves the industry, of course. They [managers of the Movement] recognized that the lack of better educational training for workers undermined productivity. (...) Secondly, they want to expand the Movement, going beyond the spectrum of [only] the Federation of Industries. [They] have already included the Federation of Commerce [*Federação do Comércio de Bens, Serviços e Turismo – Fecomércio*], and wish to make it a movement for all. In other words, it would be the ‘All For Education’ [*Todos Pela Educação*] movement] in the state of Santa Catarina.

This description of the goals of the Movement refers to its two core competencies. The first is educating for the labor market, which ‘comprises the strengthening of the partnership with economic sectors to promote the education, qualification, and professional development of workers and leaders, whereby education represents a key element towards increasing productivity and competitiveness’ (Movimento, n.d.). According to one respondent from the private sector:

Improving workers’ educational level will certainly provide a positive effect on the company, on industry in terms of competitiveness. The effects and repercussions for the worker will also be quite good because a more technically qualified worker has a higher

¹⁰*Cenecista* derives from the initials of the National Campaign for Community Schools (*Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade – CNEC*), a Brazilian education system established in 1943, which consisted of 268 basic education and 19 higher education institutions in 2015. More information is available at <http://www.cnec.br/>.

¹¹Santa Catarina represents 3% of the Brazilian population (IBGE, 2017).

chance of career progress. With regards to a career within the company, they [the more technically qualified workers] have a higher chance of receiving better compensation. Moreover, inasmuch as the workers enhance their education level, there will be a strong benefit to their family. Education as it turns out (...) is not only a matter of industry competitiveness, but also competitiveness for the family, a healthier family. Worker become healthier, and care more about personal protection. Such concern about their health in the workplace rebounds to family health care, and also to children's education.

The second core competency of the Movement is articulation and social influence towards education in the state, which 'comprises the construction of a shared agenda to improve education indicators in Santa Catarina, through mobilization and articulation between the public and the economic sectors' (Movimento, n.d.). In 2014, Movement president Glauco José Côrte argued that the challenge of 'bounding together public authorities and the private initiative around a shared agenda to improve education indicators in Santa Catarina' has already been accomplished through updates to the basic education curriculum of the state, representation in the State Forum for Education (*Fórum Estadual de Educação*), support for developing the Municipal Plans for Education (*Planos Municipais de Educação*), and collaboration on developing the State Plan for Education (*Plano Estadual de Educação*) (Movimento, 2014).

Another actor from the private sector connects the work of the Movement to the use of data for education governance, deepening the analysis of the existing data (PISA, IDEB, ENEM, and other indicators) and comparing Santa Catarina with other countries, once 'Santa Catarina, when compared to other Brazilian states, is always at the top'. The Movement shares data with municipalities and develops different actions and projects using such data. Consensus exists among respondents whereby education indicators are associated with state competitiveness and improving education guarantees economic growth.

During the first three years of existence, the Movement recruited 2212 members,¹² that is, organizations representing economic sectors, unions, education sectors, civil society, and the public sector. Such successful engagement stimulated upscaling: in March 2016, it became known as 'Movement Santa Catarina for Education' (*Movimento Santa Catarina Pela Educação*). In the marketing material disseminating this change, the goal of the Movement aims to 'mobilize, articulate, and influence economic sectors and public authorities for the improvement of education with regards to education level, professional qualification, and education quality' (Movimento, 2016). The Movement not only incorporates the idea that civil society, together with the state, should take responsibility over education, but also acknowledges its important role as a representative to make this happen.

According to an interview with one of the actors engaged in FIESC's activities, the mobilization, articulation, and influence to which the Movement's goal refers seek to inform public policies. This is accomplished, according to the interviewee, through the governance structure of the Movement, which includes the State Secretary of Education, the president of the National Association of Municipal Secretaries of Education (*União Nacional dos Dirigentes Municipais de Educação* [UNDIME]), the president of the State Board of Education (CEE-SC), the rector of the Federal Institute of Education in Santa Catarina (IFSC), as well as representatives from the Ayrton Senna Institute, the movement 'All For Education', the Maurício Sirotsky Sobrinho Foundation, the state branch of the Brazilian Association of Human Resources (ABRH-SC), the Workers Federation, and a group of 32 young leaders from across the state.

¹²According to the interviews, Movement membership carries no cost for member organizations. The formality of joining the Movement reflects the training and qualification opportunities offered by FIESC.

Internationally, the Movement is engaged with IDB and WB, and at the national level with different national organizations, such as the movement 'All For Education' (to which the Movement is often compared according to respondents), the Ayrton Senna Institute, the Vitor Civita Foundation, the Natura Institute, the National Confederation of Industry (CNI), and the National Board of Education (CNE). Subnational interviews showed that the national-state-municipal and public-private articulations impact daily political activities in Santa Catarina:

Interviewer: (...) And who would be your partners from outside the Secretariat [State Secretariat of Education], if there is any partnership?

Interviewee: We have several partnerships concerning projects in the field of technology. We have a pilot project running in Chapecó with the Ayrton Senna Institute, which applies a [different] methodology to state schools in the municipality of Chapecó (...).

Interviewer: Was it an initiative from the Chapecó municipal authorities?

Interviewee: No. The State Secretary [of Education] is president of CONSED [National Board of State Secretaries of Education – *Conselho Nacional de Secretários de Educação*]. The project was presented at a meeting in which they [the State Secretary and the president of UNDIME] were [present]. The president of UNDIME, which is the Association of Municipal Secretaries [of Education], is also the Municipal Secretary [of Education] in Chapecó. She decided to join the program and the State Secretary said that state schools would also join. That's why [the project started] in Chapecó. We also have several collaborations with FIESC in our projects. We have agreed on other partnerships. We have one with Google. We do everything we can to bolster, to help the learning process of our students (representative of state government)

This narrative was present, for instance, when planning the new organizational structure of the State Secretariat of Education, which changed between 2015 and 2016, and in the integration of municipal and state education systems. A representative of the state government refers to these as 'co-participation' projects that create 'local educational agglomerations.'

In addition to ensuring the development of a shared agenda, the engagement and articulation among different organizations provides an advantage in persuading, combating resistance, and legitimizing discourses, as pointed out by a respondent from the private sector:

The presence of the State Secretary of Education as well as the president of the municipal schools' association [UNDIME] is crucial because there is always some resistance from the public sector when one adopts the kind of initiative that we do. We have already tried to be closer partners with public schooling, primarily at the upper secondary level, but we noticed that there is a certain fear that public sector [educational] professionals would lose space, or there would be unfavorable assessments. Thus, having the State Secretariat of Education and the UNDIME president together is important. However, in fact, what granted us some ground in our journey was the other successful initiatives in the country... the 'All For Education' is very important, the Ayrton Senna Institute. We have agreements with these institutes and we are always exchanging ideas with them....

In general, respondents perceived partnership with and engagement between the public and private sectors as positive. They did not mention about resources moving from private institutions to public agencies, but essentially highlighted the cultural change and paradigm shift arising from the public-private interface. Such changes are embedded in managerial rationality, according the interviews, concerning both regulation and accountability.

When Brazilian society believes this [that we could have quality in education for all], the education problem will be solved. We have external and internal problems. Despite dealing with far more external problems, several internal problems persist, such as evaluation. Teachers are the first ones willing to evaluate students, but they [teachers] do not want to be evaluated.... Absences, leaves etc., they impact us a lot. These are the problems that we criticize. I do not refer to what happens in Brasília. Sometimes we do not take into consideration that the lessons started late; that teachers had a problem that would not require them to miss a work day, but they do miss it. This impairs [education]. I tend to say that the worst lesson is the one not taught. The second worst is the one that was poorly taught. (representative of municipal government)

On the one hand, however, partnerships benefit from the informality that sustain them. For example, ‘the relationship with public authorities is quite easy, much easier than it would be in São Paulo, Rio, or Minas, which are larger states. If I call the governor now, he answers me. If he cannot [answer] now, he will call me back’ (actor from the private sector). On the other hand, such partnerships are predominantly symbolic, as pointed out by a representative of the municipal government: ‘we could have had partnerships, but they are more difficult; since approvals [for decision-making] take longer, it would be more difficult through formal partnerships.’ To enable the progression of activities, the public authorities opt to outsource, searching for ‘partners’ in the private sector to provide services in order to accomplish governmental goals.

The logic of private organizations permeates public education systems through the demand for greater professionalization and standardization of educational processes. *Prova Floripa*, the large-scale annual assessment of students in the Florianópolis education system, illustrates this. In 2015, the development of the tests, previously completed by municipal system personnel, was outsourced. ‘We have been improving [*Prova Floripa*]’, said a municipal government representative. ‘Last year, we hired a company to enhance our perspective in order to become more attentive to the structure of [*Prova Floripa*’s] questions.’ In addition to the test design, such ‘outsourced’ work also changed the way data were disseminated to and used by schools, offering a standard analysis to the school community.

It offers an analysis for us to take into account certain elements, certain data, which include the gaps, and, moreover, to think about the possibilities [of change]. We bring together such data and disseminate them to teachers at schools. Every school receives its own report with this information and teachers have the possibility to elaborate [on the data].... We have refined the data with work provided by that company. (representative of municipal government)

As mentioned above, respondents share the opinion that they need to be surrounded by data to ensure good management and good governance. Most were satisfied with the current large-scale assessments, although some believe evaluations should be intensified, including teachers’ and school principals’ assessments. Additional data, they said, would support results-oriented management, aligning goals to career plans and human resources management, and for granting awards and bonuses to high-performing teachers, principals, and schools.

To summarize, it is possible to observe an empty discourse about public education, since the ideas from the private sector appear more appreciated. The use of terms and practices widely used in the private sector seem to grant more legitimacy to public actions, which are considered bureaucratic, time-consuming, and inefficient. In addition, the focus lies more on ends—outcomes—than on means (or processes), which can be either public or private, as illustrated in the following quote:

The private sector has positive aspects, including, for instance, the speed and degree of flexibility in executing a specific action. The public sector has less [speed and flexibility]; but, to compensate, the public sector is... more capable of agglutinating actions at a large scale, which the private sector lacks. Thus, I think the participation of everyone is important to creating [shared] designs. At any given moment, the private sector has a greater role; at another moment, the role of the public sector is larger; I think this is the way to get there. Of course, from the principle and by principle, I understand that everything related to basic education should be freely provided, in order to grant access to all, so that all have access to the best possible education. If someone chooses to study in a private school, paying [the tuition fee for that], it is their option; but the state must have the capacity to ensure free education, regardless of doing so through a model similar to Chile's with vouchers, through a model of public-private partnership similar to how Ceará [a Brazilian state] has been operating and what Goiás [another Brazilian state] is willing to implement, with charter schools similar to those in the United States. In my opinion, these are tools, methods. Once the project is well-defined, the way you achieve a good result does not matter, whether it is through partnership with private organizations or not, private management or public management, as long as you ensure access to quality education, regardless of where the child is born or the child's family. For me, all models are valid; what will measure this [the validity] is the outcome you achieve in the end. (representative of state government)

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

The analysis of interviews suggests that education in Santa Catarina is oriented by a governance model that values outcomes more than how they are obtained. Such a finding indicates an association with NPM ideas, also considered through the intense use of managerial terminology, such as management, performance, articulation, network, goal, strategy, outcome, and result. Accountability is also present in the subnational actors' discourse, but it is predominantly delegated to other actors with less political power (teachers, for instance). Moreover, their discourses are immersed in comparisons (between municipalities, states, and countries), which sustains a 'naturalized' character to comparisons in policymaking. The engagement of distinct actors, representing both public and private sectors, including some volunteers, through various FIESC initiatives, ensures greater participation and the subsequent empowerment of individuals in policymaking.

The empowerment of individuals is used as a strategy for rationalizing education, as stated by Bromley & Meyer (2015) in reference to the expansion of rational organizations in the face of uncertainties in the contemporary world. Rationalization is pursued in Santa Catarina primarily through measurement and evaluation in education. Professionalization efforts, primarily concerning managerial positions, are also present in the state, which hires managers instead of educators for various positions in education across both public and private sectors, and emphasizes managerial training for both administrative and school personnel. The rules, laws, and regulations follow national demands, whereas state actions merely reflect federal discussions. The major contrast to Bromley & Meyer's (2015) theoretical framework lies in the articulations across distinct actors in different directions (subnational-national, subnational-international, public-private) in Santa Catarina, alleviating risks and uncertainties, and resulting in cultural transformations in a coordinated and integrated way. The multidirectional articulations in Santa Catarina presented here, therefore, enhance the theoretical scope of previous research.

Of particular note is the way education policies and practices have been steered in the state, suggesting an intention to adopt a post-bureaucratic governance model in the near future. Stimulus to competitiveness exists, although competition remains moderate between private schools and almost nonexistent among public schools. Despite this, the continuous improvement of educational processes, characterizing the post-bureaucratic model, is not yet embedded in the discourses of actors in the field of education in Santa Catarina.

Furthermore, the increasing use of data and the favorable discourse towards such use shows a disposition towards introducing governance through data in Santa Catarina. Although state politics orient towards an intertwined network of more or less autonomous actors, reality suggests this is far from governance at a distance. The relative autonomy of institutions and the lack of expertise at the subnational level undermine the sustainability of governance at a distance.

The predominant governance model in Santa Catarina associates public and private sectors, particularly concerning ideas and discourses circulating in the field of education. A well-articulated network of public and private actors is responsible for transmitting such ideas to the government. It is remarkable, however, that mobilization appears more impactful regarding the dissemination of ideas than effectively putting them into practice. A combined analysis of interviews with municipal and state government representatives and interviews with school community actors (teachers, principals, students, and parents) may offer inputs regarding how to tackle this issue.

In addition, the state of Santa Catarina features striking characteristics such as an informality, camaraderie, associativism, and collaboration among political actors. The interview data illustrated that key actors in the state political arena attend the same events, easily communicate with each other, and share similar ideas. The recurring reference to the same group of actors and the informal relationships among them, however, may indicate that such interactions occur inside a 'closed club', in which penetrating without a formal invitation or sponsorship from another member may be difficult.

Thus, this investigation of the public-private interface in education governance in Santa Catarina provides a solid example of social learning. Political actors use both prior internal know-how and external experiences (best practices) given local demands and their personal or institutional interests to join forces with other actors and develop collaborative projects. The period analyzed in this article featured a combination of learning processes, departing from a paradigmatic shift following the redemocratization of Brazil when NPM principles were introduced, to moments of soft change or even continuity. Education governance continues to pursue similar goals, maintaining or changing the political tools according to new articulations developed. Political diplomacy prevails.

This article analyzed a subnational case to investigate the interface of the private sector in the public sphere, expecting it would be simpler to explore the social interactions in a less complex space. The subnational level, however, is not necessarily less complex. Complexity permeates human relationships and political associations, regardless of the size, scale, or scope of the context. As such, this study does not exhaust the possibilities for investigating public-private interfaces. A variety of perspectives may be explored to complement this research, including, for instance, an analytical study focused on only one policy (or set of related policies) to investigate how private ideas permeate that particular sphere. Other research could focus on different subnational contexts (state or municipalities), perhaps providing, but not confined to, a comparative perspective. If the idea is to compare education governance in different settings, future research may compare distinct levels, for instance, state versus national or municipal versus state. Furthermore, this topic benefits from an investigation of the effects of public-private interface in education governance to public schools.

To conclude, this analysis shows that the context and socio-historic developments characterizing a specific time and space deeply influence future political outcomes. Although different models characterize governance processes and theories to explain political change, each has

its own peculiarity. In fact, governance in practice tends to result from a combination of different models—or a hybrid—that grants more space to variability, divergence, and complexity. Contingencies differ in distinct contexts. Thus, studies concerning windows of opportunity (Kingdon, 2003) and path dependencies (Capano, 2009; Pierson, 2000) may allow interesting perspectives to explore this topic in future research.

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